Regional Passport Office, Ahmedabad

266. SHRI RAOOF VALIULLAH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Regional Passport Office at Ahmedabad is without port Officer for the last two years;

(b) whether at present the acting Regional Passport Officer for the last level of Public Relations Officer;

(c) whether there is an acute shortage of staff resulting in delay in the issue of fresh passport and what is the strength of the present staff againt the sanctioned strength;

(d) if so, what action Government have taken; and

(e) the number of applications for passports pending for more than three months in that office?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. The present Head of office is of the status of Assistant Passport Officer.

(c) and (d) No, Sir.

Out of the sanctioned strength of 76 posts in the passport office, Ahmedabad, 11 were vacant as on 1-7-1985. Even for eleven posts orders have already been issued to fill up these posts and incumbents are expected to be in position shortly.

(e) 430.

Effects on the Digestive Properties of 'Zeera Pani' in Space

267. SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state whether the Indian Astronaut on board the Space Shuttle is likely to carry a typical Indian soft drink like 'Zeera Pani' to check the effects of its digestive properties in Space?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT, ATOMIC ENERGY, SPACE AND ELECTRONICS (SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL): No, Sir.

Astronauts for Space Shuttle

268. SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what was the number of candidates considered out of whom the two astronauts for the space-shuttle were finally selected;

(b) the reasons for not selecting a women astronaut in the team; and

(c) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to select a woman candidate as astronaut in such flights in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT, ATOMIC ENERGY, SPACE AND ELECTRONICS (SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL): (a) The two final candidates for the Indian Payload Specialist flight on US—NASA Space Transportation System (STS) were selected from an initial set of over 260 Scientists/Engineers of DOS/ISRO who had volunteered for the selection.

(b) The initial set of volunteers had several women. However in the final round of selections no women candidates were considered as all women volunteers failed to pass medical examinations conducted as per medical standards prescribed for the Payload Specialists on STS.